

Smart Growth Success Stories in the Pioneer Valley



Presented by:
The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
October 22, 2004



Valley Vision: The Regional Land Use Plan for the Pioneer Valley

Valley Vision includes:

- Smart growth strategies and model bylaws
- Regional GIS map illustrating areas recommended for growth, protection
- Outreach and local technical assistance (LTA) program for communities

12 Smart Growth Strategies:

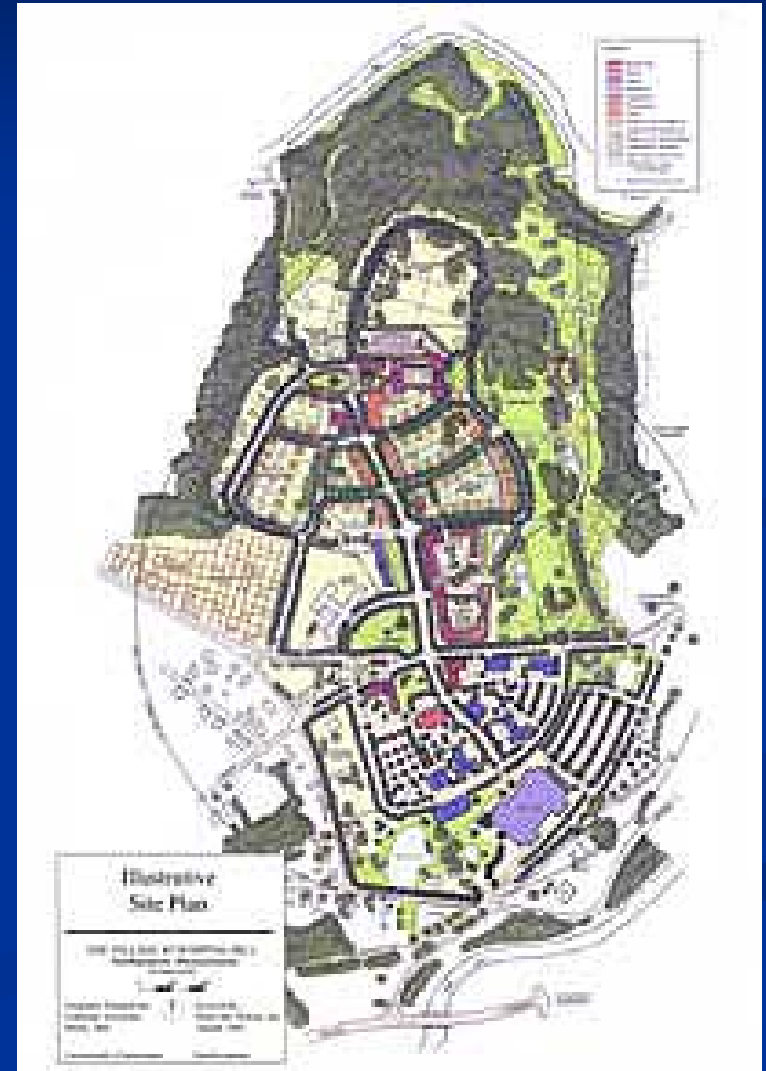
1. Encourage traditional neighborhood developments
2. Promote compact, mixed use village centers
3. Create incentives for downtown revitalization
4. Develop incentives for cluster developments
5. Improve housing opportunities and neighborhood quality
6. Redevelop Brownfields

...Strategies Continued

7. Encourage transit oriented developments
8. Establish greenbelts and blueways for open space protection
9. Build an intermodal pedestrian, bicycle, and transit network
10. Protect environmental quality and prevent pollution
11. Control commercial strip development
12. Improve infrastructure in urban areas and limit infrastructure expansions


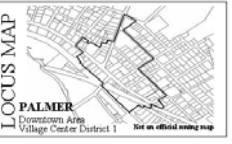

1. Encourage Traditional Neighborhood Developments

- Northampton: Village at Hospital Hill – A compact mixed use development on 124 acres at the site of the former Northampton State Hospital



2. Promote Compact, Mixed Use Village Centers

- Palmer Village Zoning – Location-specific standards adopted in four villages encourage a traditional pattern of development and mix of uses

Village Center District I		Palmer Town Center		Palmer, Massachusetts	
A. Purpose		B. Requirements		C. Land Use	
<p>Village Center District I (VCI)</p> <p>1. Purpose</p> <p>It is the purpose of this bylaw to allow for the orderly and planned development of Palmer's downtown area.</p> <p>The bylaw seeks to encourage the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail shops, restaurants, offices, civic facilities and public will be located in close proximity so that these uses are within walking distance of the downtown center. • A broad range of commercial enterprises and institutional uses will provide a vital center for daily activities. • A finite physical area will define the downtown and provide a framework for the continuation of a strong sense of community. <p>2. Organization</p> <p>The Village Center District I bylaw is presented in three sections. Section A describes the purpose and organizational structure of the bylaw. Section B describes general requirements for proposed. Section C presents a table of use and standards for proposed development in the VCI District.</p>		<p>1. General Requirements</p> <p>A. The VCI District, the site of use of land and building shall not be changed, altered, or enlarged, and no use, use of land or construction of new buildings will be permitted except in accordance with the provisions of this By-Law.</p> <p>B. Setbacks and Side</p> <p>The VCI District is located on the site of the former Palmer, on the corner of the Town of Palmer, on the corner of the Planning Board and the Town of Palmer.</p> <p>C. General Use</p> <p>A. The VCI District, as shown on the map, shall be used for the following purposes: Retail, Civic, Commercial, and Institutional.</p> <p>D. General Use</p> <p>A. The VCI District, as shown on the map, shall be used for the following purposes: Retail, Civic, Commercial, and Institutional.</p>		<p>1. Land Use</p> <p>A. The following uses are permitted in the VCI District:</p> <p>B. The following uses are prohibited in the VCI District:</p> <p>C. The following uses are permitted in the VCI District:</p> <p>D. The following uses are prohibited in the VCI District:</p>	
					

2. Promote Compact, Mixed Use Village Centers

- East Longmeadow – Municipal re-investment in town center demonstrated by new library project in the heart of the community

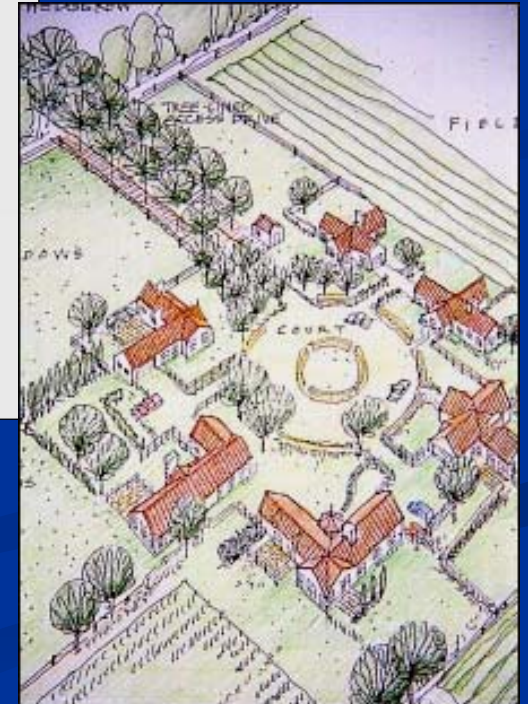
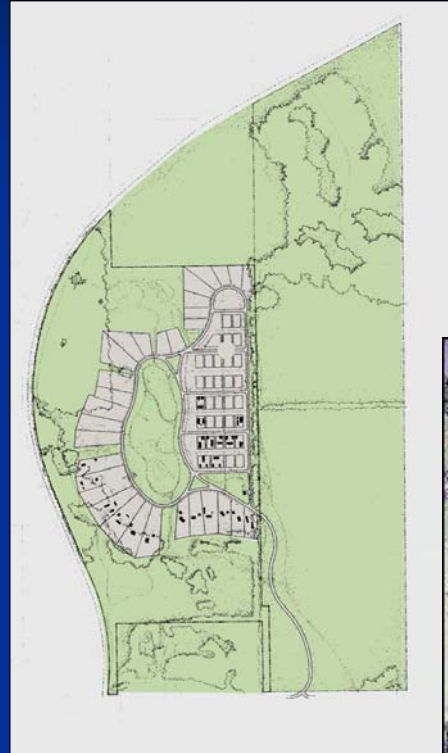
3. Create Incentives for Downtown Revitalization

- Amherst – Recent construction of a parking garage to serve the town center business district
- Springfield – Indian Orchard Neighborhood Design Guidelines to promote attractive and vital neighborhood development



4. Develop Incentives for Cluster Development

- Hatfield –
Recent adoption of cluster development option with built-in density bonus
- Belchertown –
1st approved by-right cluster development this summer



5. Improve Housing Opportunities and Neighborhood Quality

- Holyoke Hope IV-
Revitalization of urban
neighborhood using
traditional town-planning
concepts resulting in
affordable homes and an
improved neighborhood
environment



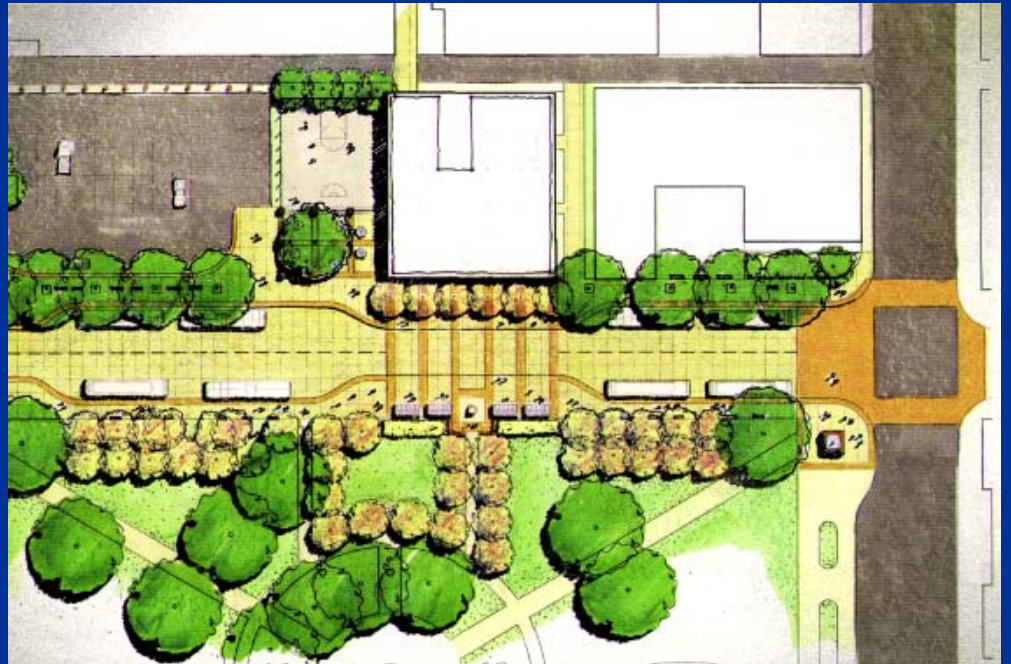
6. Redevelop Brownfields

- Easthampton –Eastworks developed as a mixed use project in the former StanHome plant
- Chester Regional Elementary School
-(EPA Success story)
- PVPC Regional EPA Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund, FY 2004 EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant



7. Encourage Transit-Oriented Developments

- Holyoke & Westfield:
Multi-Modal, Mixed Use Centers under development in central business districts



8. Establish Greenbelts and Blueways for Open Space Protection

- TDR –Hadley, Hatfield, Westfield
- Westfield River Wild and Scenic and protection Districts
- Mt. Tom and Mt. Holyoke Ranges MOA
- Pioneer Valley Regional Greenways Plan (2003)
- CPA Adopted in 7 Communities (on Fall ballot in at least 3 communities)



9. Build an Intermodal Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Network

- Connecticut River Walk and Bikeway
- Manhan Rail Trail
- Southwick/Westfield Rail Trail
- Agawam Bike Path
- Westfield Intermodal MXD
- Holyoke Intermodal Project
- Worthington Corners Pedestrian Trail



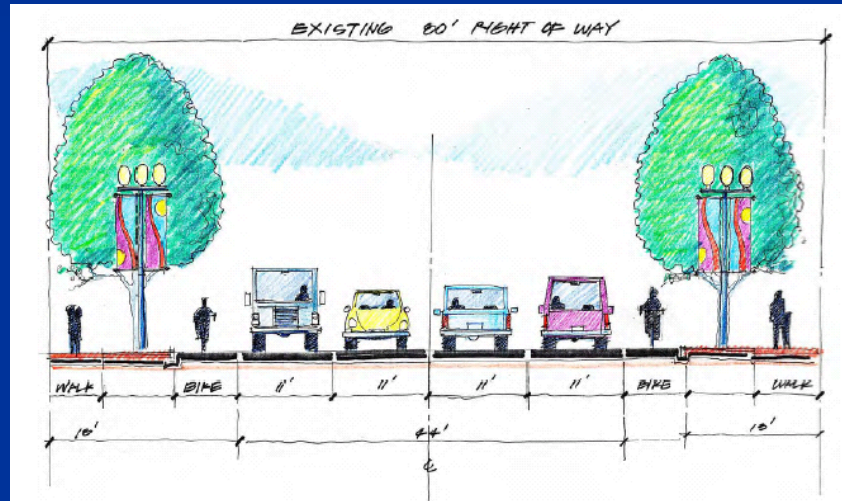
10. Protect Environmental Quality and Prevent Pollution

- Water Supply Protection Overlay Districts
- Barnes Aquifer Protection Advisory Committee
- NPDES Phase II Stormwater Bylaws
- Connecticut River Clean-up Compact
- WR Wild and Scenic Committee



11. Control Commercial Strip Development

- Northampton – Recently adopted King Street Corridor Development Standards



- Hadley – Commercial Strip Development Controls

12. Improve Infrastructure in Urban Areas and Limit Infrastructure Expansions

- Chicopee, Springfield, Holyoke CSO improvements



Chapter 40R, Smart Growth Zoning

- Goal: address state's housing shortage
- Encourages communities to create Smart Growth Zoning Districts
- SGZDs must allow high-density housing, with lower densities allowed for small towns
- Design standards and project reviews
- State review of local SGZDs
- Financial incentives for adoption of SGZDs

DHCD Priority Development Fund

- State planning assistance grants up to \$50,000
- First come, first served basis
- For communities seeking to increase housing production
- Zoning activities to increase housing
- Education and outreach efforts
- Identification of properties, site evaluation, land assembly, feasibility analysis

EOEA Smart Growth Technical Assistance Grants Program

- Planning implementation assistance grants up to \$30,000 per project
- For communities seeking to improve Commonwealth Capital Application Scores
- Application Deadline: **November 15th**, 2004
with projects to be completed by June 30th, 2005
(potential 6-month extension available)

EOEA Smart Growth Technical Assistance Grants Program

- Zoning activities to implement Smart Growth principles at the municipal or regional level (brownfields planning, water resource planning, zoning consistency, open space/natural resource policy efforts, efforts to strengthen working landscapes)
- May include education and outreach efforts
- Focus on non-housing implementation

EOEA Smart Growth Technical Assistance Grants Program

- Pioneer Valley Regional Application is being developed
- Regional workplan to include projects in several communities
- EOE A requires 25% match against state funds (cannot include in-kind volunteer support)
- PVPC to assist with some amount of this match
- HCI may assist Highland communities with match as well

Renewable Energy in the Pioneer Valley



What PVPC is doing

- Inventory of Resources, Technology Development, Partners and Activities
- Regulatory Assessment
- Locals Official's Guide to Zoning and Land Use for RE

RE Status in our region

- Few Planning Directors, Planning Boards or DPW staff know (or seem to care) about RE
- Diverse possibilities for RE including
 - existing: landfill gas, solar photovoltaics, and biomass
 - possible: wind, and hydroelectric

Inventory

- Wind Energy
- Biomass
- Solar Photovoltaic
- Landfill Gas

Renewable Energy Generated here

- approx 9MW from Landfill Gas
 - Granby Sanitary Landfill produces 2.8 MW
 - Chicopee produces just under 6MW
- Westfield is in the process of converting their landfill and the city of Northampton has been considering it for a while

RE in the Pioneer Valley

- Lots of PV, but no good way to measure it
- Some towns looking into municipal wind turbines
- Town of Russell is the potential site for a biomass power plant

Organizations Involved in RE

- UMASS Renewable Energy Research Lab
- Cities for Climate Protection: Amherst, Northampton, Springfield
- Not for Profit Organizations
 - CET, Co-op Plus, SSNE, NESEA

Businesses

- Stevens Roofing Systems-Holyoke
- Kesco Intl Corp-Longmeadow
- New England Solar Electric Inc., Worthington
- O'Connell Energy Group-Holyoke

Identified Barriers to Distributed Generation

- Market development
- Equipment improvements
- Reduction of manufacturing costs (and hence retail process) through mass production

Policy-related Challenges and Barriers

- Utility interconnection
- Lack of standards
- Insufficient regulatory experience
- Absence of policies and rules that apply to small generators

Progress on Barriers

- Feds—working to establish uniform technical standards and market policies to facilitate development of DG
- State—MA Dep. of Telcom and Energy developing a process to establish uniform policies for utility interconnection for generation of 60kw and below
- RPS and a market for RECs in place
- Both—significant financial incentives—grants and tax credits

Barriers PVPC Identified

- General
- Municipal Zoning
- Historic Commissions
- Environmental
- Local Admin of State Codes

General

- Lack of interest/awareness of DG technologies in regulatory and policy-making communities
- Differential knowledge of DG technologies
- Overall exclusion of biomass

Zoning

- Lack of clarity regarding the threshold between accessory use and primary use for distributed generation facilities
- Lack of consistent definition and interpretation of distributed generation as a primary use
- Inconsistent attention to the permitting of power generation in local by-laws
- Uncertain permitting pathways due to an absence of appropriate use terms to cover distributed generation

Zoning (cont.)

- Extensive review processes and potential for excessive time delays arising from the need for special permits, variances, or zoning amendments to accommodate distributed generation facilities
- Inconsistent treatment of wind facilities
- Lack of height exemptions for wind facilities
- Omission of less familiar technologies, such as biomass and landfill gas
- Failure to extend protections, in effect for solar and wind, to biomass

Historic Commissions

- Absence of consideration for wind power generating facilities
- Incompatibility of modern wind towers with historic district requirements
- Absence of exemption from historic district regulation for public utilities

Environmental

- Potential for Conservation Commission review and ensuing appeals/time delays
- Possible delays from more rigorous environmental standards imposed on renewable energy versus conventional energy generation

Local Admin of State Codes

- Possible delays from building, electrical, and plumbing code enforcement where independent engineering review is required
- Additional construction costs from compliance with fire safety requirements
- Possible referral by Board of Health to State Department of Environmental Protection of potential air pollution problems where facilities use less clean fuels, as with wood-burning biomass facilities

Overcoming Barriers at the Local Level

- Rules and Regs for DG

example—city of West Springfield has a provision in zoning bylaws entitled “Energy Use and Conservation” whose purpose is to encourage alternative sources of energy and accomplish the goals of the Master Plan.

Helping Communities to be RE-Friendly

- Educational Pamphlet
- an overview of how zoning and land use controls may impact renewable energy development, combined with recommendations to guide local officials in promoting renewable energy.

What are we doing now?

- Strategic plan-collaboration with FRCOG and area utilities
- Biomass Proposal-pending
- Grants to Foundations
- ongoing outreach and education
- www.pvsustain.com